

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **North Dakota Department of Health Provides Advice on African Travel**

BISMARCK, N.D. –The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) has advice to help keep those who plan to travel to Africa in the near future and their loved ones safe in light of the current Ebola outbreak.

“We want to make sure that everyone is as safe as possible without hindering their ability to travel as they wish,” according to Michelle Feist, Program Manager at the NDDoH’s Division of Disease Control. “One of the challenges with travel is that we do not know from week to week what the situation will be in terms of where the outbreak may spread, what services might be available if someone became ill in another country, and what kind of restrictions might be in place when people come back to the U.S. Travel to and from the vast majority of African countries is safe and unrestricted, though we advise following routine recommendations for foreign travel. However, travelers should be aware of potential issues when traveling to West Africa or Democratic Republic of the Congo.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warns against travel to Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia except for those who provide essential medical and humanitarian services and has issued a travel alert for Mali. The NDDoH recognizes that medical workers are necessary to stop the outbreak in Africa and thereby protect the U.S. against Ebola. However, NDDoH advises that church and other humanitarian groups avoid or postpone travel to the affected countries unless they are providing medical services under the auspices of a larger humanitarian or governmental group. Anyone not directly involved in medical work should not travel to these countries until the outbreak is contained and travel restrictions are lifted.

The CDC has not issued travel warnings for other countries in West Africa. However, if transmission were to occur in another country while a person was traveling, their return circumstances may change substantially and may provide a threat to their health. In an abundance of caution, NDDoH advises that such travel be considered carefully and postponed, if possible, until the outbreak is over. The remaining countries in West Africa are Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Togo.

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The CDC has issued an advisory to practice enhanced precautions when traveling in Democratic Republic of the Congo because of an outbreak of Ebola that is unrelated to the outbreak in West Africa. NDDoH advises that such travel be considered carefully as to its necessity, and postponed, if possible, until the outbreak is over.

Travelers going to the other countries in Africa should follow the precautions routinely recommended for people traveling to those areas. Travelers returning from countries not experiencing an Ebola outbreak have no need to self-monitor following their return.

NDDoH asks that a person traveling to Guinea, Sierra Leone, Mali or Liberia

- Inform the NDDoH prior to traveling
- Inform their employer of their travel plans
- Coordinate travel with a well-established group (consult USAID at [www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov) or an experienced umbrella group, such as Doctors Without Borders) that routinely operates in these countries
- Follow all recommendations of the CDC for protecting their health
- Inform the NDDoH of their expected return date
- Review their health insurance policy to make sure that medical care and transport home would be covered in the event of illness or injury

Upon a traveler's return to North Dakota, we ask that they

- Comply with all CDC entry procedures
- Follow all CDC protocols for monitoring their health
- Contact the NDDoH as soon as they return to the state to coordinate their 21 day monitoring period

The NDDoH contact phone number for those who are traveling is 1.800.211.4451.

General information about Ebola is available on the NDDoH website at <http://www.ndhealth.gov/disease/ebola/default.aspx>. This page also contains access to the CDC website, which is updated regularly. NDDoH also posts information on their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/home.php> and on their Twitter page at <https://twitter.com/NDDOH>. Use #NDEbolaInfo.

For more information, contact Michelle Feist, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2378.

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